

PARKER'S PAPER

by Susan Stepp

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A Comedic Duet

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SYNOPSIS: A college professor conferences with a student about his failing grade. As the conversation progresses, the professor becomes more and more frustrated as the clueless student gives new meaning to the phrase “under achiever.”

TIME: Present day, end of semester.

SETTING: Professor Brown's office.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 male, 1 either)

PARKER (m) Affable, not-so-sharp college student. *(33 lines)*

PROFESSOR BROWN (m/f) Parker's concerned professor. *(42 lines)*

SET: A desk with 2 chairs, one behind the desk, and the other across from the desk. For a more elaborate set, office accessories could be added (plant, lamp, bookshelf, etc.)

PROPS

- backpack
- phone
- papers on desk
- pill bottle
- glass of water

COSTUMES

PARKER – dressed casually.

PROFESSOR BROWN – dressed professionally.

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

Parker should be played with an easy going and somewhat clue-less personality, displaying relaxed body language. The frustration level of Professor Brown should be animated and grow in intensity throughout the play. In the sequence where Professor Brown is imaginary a calming beach scene, Parker could act out what he's hearing as though he's experiencing it himself. For example, when Professor Brown says, "the warm sun on my face," Parker could lift his face upward as though enjoying the sun. For extra fun, he could pull out a pair of sunglasses and put them on.

DO NOT COPY

AT START: *Professor Brown's office during office hours. PROFESSOR BROWN sits behind desk, talking on the phone. Second chair sits across from desk.*

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Angry tone.*) You listen up, Milton! Just because you have tenure doesn't give you the right to boss the rest of us around. I know it was you who stole lecture hall B out from under me! You'd better watch your back because... Hello? Milton? Hello? Don't you dare hang up on me, you arrogant—

PARKER: (*Wearing backpack, enters all smiles and walks towards desk.*) Professor Brown? You wanted to see me?

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Hangs up phone, stands and motions to chair, trying to calm down.*) Hi, Parker. Have a seat.

PARKER and PROFESSOR sit. PROFESSOR shuffles through some papers until finding Parker's.

PROFESSOR BROWN: I wanted to talk to you about your grade this semester. I'm very concerned. You've failed to turn in several assignments, missed a number of classes and your score on the midterm was the lowest in the class. Are you doing this poorly in your other courses?

PARKER: (*With confidence.*) Oh no, Professor.

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Relieved.*) That's good to hear.

PARKER: I'm doing way worse.

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Surprised.*) I'm not sure that's possible but that's a conversation for another day.

PARKER: (*Stands to leave.*) Sure thing, Professor B. I'll stop by Monday.

PROFESSOR BROWN: No, Parker. It was just an expression. I want to talk to you now about your most recent paper.

PARKER sits.

PROFESSOR BROWN: First of all, it's three weeks past the deadline.

PARKER: (*Apologetic.*) Yeah, I'm sorry about that. In my defense, I've been super busy with a paper I had due three weeks ago.

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Confused.*) Yes, I know. This class was the one that had a paper due.

PARKER: Awesome! Then you totally get it! (*Smiles.*)

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Annoyed.*) No, Parker, I don't get it. I've assigned four papers this semester, none of which you turned in, and now the one you complete is three weeks late. On top of that, your class attendance record is terrible.

PARKER: (*Smiles.*) Blame that on biology, Professor. Eleven o'clock is just a little too early for me. Not a problem, though. I watch the live stream every Tuesday instead.

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Confused.*) I don't live stream the class.

PARKER: (*Frowns.*) Then what the heck have I been watching every Tuesday at eleven?

PROFESSOR BROWN: I have no idea because this class is on Thursdays at two-thirty.

PARKER: Ugh... that's not gonna work for me. I have another class at that same time.

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Becoming agitated.*) I know, Parker. It's this class. (*Balls fist and puts in mouth as though trying to calm down. Takes a deep breath.*) How about we circle back to the attendance problem later?

PARKER: (*Stands.*) Can do! I'll stop by Thursday at two-thirty. That's when you're available, right?

PROFESSOR BROWN: No, I'm not available. That's when I'm in class! Sit down, please.

PARKER sits.

PROFESSOR BROWN: Why don't we talk about the paper you just submitted. You titled it, "Fishing Is Not for Everyone, Especially the Fishes."

PARKER: (*Serious.*) It really isn't.

PROFESSOR BROWN: The assignment was to write a review of Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet.

PARKER: (*Skeptical with smile.*) Are you sure about that, Professor Brown?

PROFESSOR BROWN: Of course, I am. I made the assignment.

PARKER: (*Quizzical look.*) Well, that's news to me. That's okay though, right? I bet, with this being a creative writing class, you like it when students think outside the box.

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Annoyed.*) This isn't a creative writing class! It's Foundations in Literature 101. How do you not know that?

PARKER: Oh... you'd be surprised at all the things I do not know!

PROFESSOR BROWN: Aside from the fact that you didn't write on the subject assigned, the form and structure of the paper is what I might expect from a fifth grader.

PARKER: (*Smiles.*) Excellent!

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Confused.*) Excuse me?!

PARKER: My little sister is only in third grade so she'll be pumped to hear she writes like a fifth grader.

PROFESSOR BROWN: Wait... are you telling me your little sister wrote your paper?

PARKER: (*Annoyed look.*) And it was expensive! She seems all sweet and cuddly with her pink bows and unicorn tee shirts but she's a shark when it comes to business. She even charged me double to get it turned in on time!

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Irritated.*) But it was three weeks late!

PARKER: (*Exasperated.*) I know! (*Shaking head.*) She's a piece of work.

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Sternly.*) You do understand that taking credit for someone else's work is wrong.

PARKER: (*Thinking.*) So... wrong like I'll only get half the credit?

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Getting more exasperated.*) No, Parker. No credit.

PARKER: (*Thinking.*) So... my little sister will get the credit? Can she give it to me if she wants to? I mean, (*Rolls eyes.*) she'll probably make me pay through the nose but....

PROFESSOR BROWN: No, Parker! (*Frustrated.*) Oh, dear lord!

PARKER bows his head and clasps hands as though praying.

PROFESSOR BROWN: Parker, look at me.

PARKER looks up and smiles.

PROFESSOR BROWN: Not only does it not cover the material required and was written by someone other than you, it's riddled with copyright infringements.

PARKER: (*Apologetic.*) My bad. That's probably just drips of taco sauce from Taco Tuesday.

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Head in hands.*) No, Parker. Copyright infringements are when you use another person's words and don't give them credit.

PARKER: (*As though having a realization.*) Oh! Like when I called my buddy, Meatball, a fish-faced doofus. I should have said, "Caveman said you were a fish-faced doofus."

PROFESSOR BROWN: (*Rubs hands across face in exasperation.*) No, that is not what I'm talking about. Never mind. Not important considering everything else. Let's go over all the issues I have with this paper. First, you wrote about something completely outside the parameters of the assigned subject matter.

PARKER: (*Smiles.*) Thanks, Professor B., (*Points at PROFESSOR BROWN with a nod.*) but you're the one who inspires the creative writer in me... or actually, in my little sister.

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